



## COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER – Mahi tahi!!

### Rangers' Report - March - April 2023

#### Operational Summary

It's been a busy but wet few months! We hope everyone is well. As always, thank you to all of our supporters, volunteers and fellow community groups! This report covers March and April 2023.

Key points:

- Increased toxin uptake by rodents after switching from pindone pellets to ratabate (diphacinone) paste.
- Catch rates of rats, mice, stoats and weasels remain consistent over the past four months.
- Post-cyclone cleanup of toxin/trap lines is progressing nicely.
- Grey-faced petrels (Ōi) have recently returned and are in the early stages of mating.
- Community planting day will be held on the 11th of June with a back-up date of the 18th of June.
- Weed of the month is wild ginger.



Photo: The rare Northland horipito (*Pseudowintera insperata*).

# Predator Control

Written by BHCT ranger Tom Flynn-Plummer

For the past few months, rangers and volunteers have been switching pindone out for ratabate (diphacinone) in bait stations. There was an immediate increase in bait uptake by rodents. Uptake of ratabate has been quite high over the last month (~75% overall). Uptake on the southern side of the Reserve has been slightly lower than the northern side. The northern side of the Reserve has more bait dispersed across it, as we have prioritised clearing tracks on this side first. Pests most likely invade the Reserve from the north. This theory is supported by the fact that we catch a lot more pests towards the north. These are likely the reasons for why toxin uptake is higher on the northern side of the Reserve.

The following trapping result tables show what has been caught in the most recent two months.



## Monthly predator trapping results: March 2023

Pest/ Predator	Total # caught this month BHSR	# caught this month previous year in BHSR	# of total rats caught this month Norway or Ship rats?	BHSR				LTR & Buffer	
				Total # caught inside res. this month (i.e. not on boundary/ LTR/buffer)	Total # caught inside res. this month previous yr (i.e. not on boundary/LTR/buff er)	# caught 2023 YTD	# caught 2022 YTD	Total # caught this month LTR	Total # caught this month BUFFER
Rat	29	20	22 Ship/7 Norway	6 of 29	9 of 20	66	57	17	4
Possum	1	0	-	1 of 1	0	1	3	0	0
Stoat	3	0	-	0 of 3	0	9	10	0	1
Weasel	2	3	-	0 of 2	2 of 3	5	5	0	0
Ferret	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feral cat	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mouse	13	19	-	7 of 13	0 of 19	31	40	3	0
Hedgehog	0	0	-	0	0	0	15	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>14 of 48</b>	<b>11 of 42</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>

### Analysis:

- Seems to be quite a few rats in the area with 29 caught by BHCT. Most are Ship rats.
- Most pest catches are outside the reserve.
- LTR again was dominant in catches for this month.

**KEY:** **BHSR** – Bream Head/Te Whara Scenic Reserve.  
**LTR** – Load the Road (All Ocean Beach Road).  
**BUFFER** – Private land b/t BHSR and Ocean Beach Road.

## Monthly predator control results: April 2023

Pest/ Predator	Total # caught this month BHSR	# caught this month previous year in BHSR	# of total rats caught this month Norway or Ship rats?	BHSR				LTR & Buffer	
				Total # caught inside res. this month (i.e. not on boundary/LTR/buff er)	Total # caught inside res. this month previous yr (i.e. not on boundary/ LTR/buffer)	# caught 2023 YTD	# caught 2022 YTD	Total # caught this month LTR	Total # caught this month BUFFER
Rat	29	29	22 Ship/7 Norway	7 of 29	15 of 29	95	86	9	3
Possum	1	2	-	1 of 1	1 of 2	2	5	0	0
Stoat	2	0	-	0 of 2	0	11	10	0	0
Weasel	2	1	-	0 of 2	0 of 1	7	6	1	0
Ferret	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feral cat	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mouse	11	11	-	2 of 11	3 of 11	42	51	6	0
Hedgehog	0	0	-	0	0 of 2	0	15	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>10 of 45</b>	<b>19 of 43</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>

### Analysis:

- April 2023 rat catch numbers identical to March 2023.
- Rats are thought to have had a good summer due to the high abundance of seed available to them.



- Mouse and rat catch numbers are the same in April 2023 as April 2022.
  - Catching a similar amount of mustelids each month since the start of the year.
- LTR** – Load the Road (All Ocean Beach Road).  
**BUFFER** – Private land b/t BHSR and Ocean Beach Road.

## Advanced camera detection results

*A collaboration between the Bream Head/Te Whara Conservation Trust and Predator Free Whangārei*

Much like the months January and February, not all cameras were serviced during April and May. We have prioritised clearing our trap/toxin line tracks in the months following the cyclone. This has pulled ranger time away from getting all of our toxin lines done each month. In turn, this has meant some cameras have been missed. I say this because an analysis of current camera data may not be an accurate representation of what is happening out on the reserve.

Judging from the data we have received from Hadden, there have been many Kiwi show up on the cameras, along with a few troublesome stoats. There was one possum sighted on Busby Head during April. The few possums we see on the cameras usually end up being caught in our sentinel traps or PFW's live legholds, eventually.



**Top left:** The only possum spotted on Busby Head during April; **top right:** Kiwi perfecting the art of the selfie; **bottom left:** Stoat spotted in the NE corner of the reserve; and **bottom right:** Kiwi passing one of the cameras on Busby Head.

## Update from the Predator Free Whangārei project

Written by: Joanne Kim- Communications and Engagement Coordinator Predator Free Northland Regional Council » Te Kaunihera ā rohe o Te Taitokerau

## Predator Free Whangārei

Tiaki te whenua, tiaki te tangata

The project has been steadily busy in the last two months, moving into new working block areas and responding to possum incursions in areas the project have already been operationally active.

### Snapshot update:

- The project has been holding up an interim barrier on Robinson Road, trying to defend the Taurikura and Bream Head/Te Whara working blocks, which are in the 'Detect and Respond'

phase.

- The project plans to go 'live' in May in the Reotahi working block.
- Baseline monitoring has begun in the buffer zone.
- In total, 389 Property Agreements have been received.
- Since becoming operationally active in April last year, we have recorded:
  - 274 kg of bait take (rats and possums)
  - 136 possum trap catches
    - 33 on conventional traps
    - 86 on AT220s
    - 17 on live leg hold traps – leg hold responses have increased recently due to young male possums roaming around leaking through an interim barrier zone on Robinson Rd. Females have also been caught.

### Familiar face for new Operations Lead

As many of you may know, Su Sinclair has resigned from her Operations Lead role and is off for a working holiday visa in Mongolia! We would like to thank Su for her significant contribution to this kaupapa over the last few years and wish her the very best. We're pleased to announce Zac Coffin as the new Operations Lead, who was one of the passionate PF field team members. Zac has a passion for the conservation of Aotearoa's ecosystems, and threatened native flora and fauna. He brings over ten years working in pest control/conservation fields around the country. With Far-North whānau, Waikato university qualified, West Coast (South Island) experienced and now Whangārei based, he will bring a great mix of experience and local connections to this role.

## Grey-faced petrels/Ōi

*Written by BHCT ranger Tom Grinsted*

At the Grey-faced petrel (Ōi) study sites on J line there are clear signs birds are back prospecting. Breeding birds return to the site from early February but primarily in April/May to re-establish pair bonds, prepare burrows and mate. Tom reports that the burrow preparation has begun in earnest, with debris spread far and wide. These burrow roadworks remind him of driving to work along Whangārei Heads Road!

We will be closely monitoring these sites again this year and do all that we can to protect them over their nesting season.

The results of last year's nesting season left us very disappointed as most chicks were predated by stoats before fledging. We did everything we could to keep the stoats away from these nesting sites, but it is clear that we need to do more if we want to get rid of mustelids. We will be searching for, and trialing promising methods for mustelid control as they become available to us.



## Ranger reports

*Written by BHCT rangers' David Lawrence-Solomon and Tom Flynn-Plummer*

Been a bit of a wet one, hasn't it? We've been having consistently nasty weather since Feb, and the rain's been picking up all over the country. Batten down those hatches and make sure to keep the tarps and towels handy, this is shaping up to be a wetter winter than last year!

### What have the rangers been doing?

Fixing tracks: We're coming close to finishing the clearing and remarking those trap/toxin lines affected by the cyclone - that is to say, all of them. To a greater or lesser extent, the weather has left very little of the reserve untouched; greater, for example on H or any on an NW-facing incline, and lesser being on Y which is always treacherous at the best of times so it's hard to tell if much damage was taken at all.





Rerouting has been done all across the south side to accommodate for the massive bites taken out of the hillside, so traversing is comparatively safe again.

**Pest control:** Many volunteers have been able to come back and resume servicing their lines. Whilst prioritising track maintenance, we have continued to service our key trap/toxin lines. These are all of our lines that have predator traps on them as well as bait stations. We have also continued to service our boundary and buffer lines.

### Interesting finds

On the last Friday of April, David and Tom FP went with Andrew Townsend (botanist and technical advisor at DOC) to check on one of the rarer plant species on the reserve - the Northland horipito (*Pseudowintera insperata*). The top peak of Te Whara is one of the few places where this plant still exists. Fortunately, the plants were looking good. They had survived the cyclone and the other recent weather events. We noticed that a few juveniles had died, but this was most likely due to the previous years drought conditions. Andrew was also interested in disproving an apparent theory that no Northern rātā (*Metrosideros robusta*) remained in the reserve; after a bit of a hunt, we found a grand old specimen still going strong. There are likely a few more large individuals that were spotted from atop Te Whara, but we only got to the base of one.



## Community planting day at Home Bay

Written by BHCT ranger Tom Grinstead

Bring your whānau and friends, and join others in our community. Help plant 2,500 plants to increase habitat for our local biodiversity.

### When:

Sunday 11th of June, 9am to 12 noon. If it's raining, the event will not proceed\*.

### Where:

At 8:45am, meet at Urquhart Bay car park for a briefing. After 9am Follow the track past the gun emplacement to Home Bay where you will find us.

### What to bring:

Warm clothing, gum boots or solid footwear, raincoat, water etc. Your own spade if you have one. Hot drinks and kai will be provided.

### Back up date:

Sunday 18th June 9am to 12 noon \*If we don't plant all plants on the 11th or if we need to postpone due to wet weather, this will be communicated via our Facebook page and email.



**Te Uru Rākau**  
Forestry New Zealand

## Communications update

Written by: Annelies Struijcken - Communications committee chair

Upon entering the Reserve, you may have noticed our new brochure. It gives visitors a quick overview of the significance of the area and all the activities in which the Trust is involved. On the back you will find a handy map of the Bream Head Scenic Reserve with all the walks and tracks marked. You can also find this map on our website under 'walks and tracks'.

## Weed of the Month - May

(the following is from the Weed Action Natural Habitat Restoration Trust website (<http://weedaction.org.nz/weed-of-the-month/>))

### Wild ginger (*Hedychium gardnerianum*):

Also known as: kahili ginger, ginger lily

#### What does it look like?

Non-woody perennial with soft erect stems, growing up to 2m tall, with a short pinkish 'collar' at the base. Forms deep beds of dense, many-branched taro-like rhizomes (rhizome beds can be up to 1m deep). Large wax-covered, lance-shaped leaves arise directly from the unbranched stems, alternate arrangement. Produces flower spikes (25cm – 45cm) with fragrant lemon-yellow flowers (Feb-Apr) with conspicuous red stamens, which develop into fruiting spikes with fleshy orange fruits (15-20 mm long), containing many bright scarlet seeds. Under full light conditions up to 100 seeds are produced per flowerhead.



#### Why is it a problem?

Wild ginger is shade tolerant, long-lived and fast growing. Eventually replaces all other species as nothing can grow up through the dense mats of tubers it creates, and the dense leaves block light and smother native plants preventing regeneration. The rhizome beds, while they can be deep themselves, are shallow rooted, so when they become heavy with rain they can slip on steep sites and stream banks, causing erosion. Spread easily from birds eating the seeds, and by fragments of rhizome which can survive immersion in the sea, crushing, and years away from soil. Sets more seed in open light-filled areas, but also readily grows under forest canopy, where it expands outward, eventually opening up the canopy above it. Large risk in lowland broadleaf and kauri forest.

#### How does it spread?

Seeds are spread by birds and possibly possums. Rhizomes spread slowly outward from clumps, and new plants are established from rhizome fragments spread in dumped vegetation and fill, and by soil movement, flooding, and contaminated machinery.

#### How much of it do we have on the Whangārei Heads Peninsula?

Wild ginger is increasingly common in Whāngareī Heads. The area around Taurikura ridge, Mt Manaia and Mt Aubrey are a particular hotspot, but it is a problem all over the Heads. However, for the most part we do not yet have the extensive fields of wild ginger seen further north, but will do if we don't act to control wild ginger now.

#### What can we DO about it at Whāngareī Heads?

Fortunately, it is reasonably straightforward to control, and it can be done very successfully with minimal herbicide use. The initial priority would usually be to control the sites in the open to reduce seeding, and then tackle sites in the bush. The higher volume of seed from sites in the open and its dispersal by birds means that controlling that piece in your own backyard is more important than you think.

Seeds are relatively short lived – approximately 6 years, meaning it is possible to eliminate this plant from a site relatively quickly.

For advice on how to control visit this link: <https://weedaction.org.nz/wild-ginger/#control>

## Coming up in May/June:

**More moth plant control with Aki Tai Here...** We will be doing more big hits on our larger infestations of moth plant in the next month or two.

**Community planting days and nursery work...** Details above about the planting day. We are still pushing to have the finishing touches done on our shadehouse automatic watering system.

**More track cutting...** After our toxin/trap lines are fixed, we will be making a start on our rodent monitoring lines so we can resume gathering data on our rodent population.

Big thanks to all the other groups we work with.

Mauri ora - Keep well!

Tom Flynn-Plummer (Head Ranger)

Mobile: 0278768833

Email: [bhctrangers@gmail.com](mailto:bhctrangers@gmail.com)

